

*Amendments to the Claims*

1-45. (canceled)

46. (currently amended) A system, comprising:

a classification module that determines security association information associated with each data packet in a plurality of data packets,

wherein the classification module is configured to provide at least a portion of the security information associated with the data packets to a plurality of security processing engines that perform authentication and cryptographic functions.

47. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, further comprising a database including security association information, wherein the database is local to the classification module.

48. (previously presented) The system of claim 47, wherein the database includes one or more entries, wherein each entry defines information associated with one security association.

49. (previously presented) The system of claim 48, wherein the database is located on the same chip as the classification module.

50. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the security association information includes a sequence number, an anti-replay window, and a lifetime of the security association.

51. (previously presented) The system of claim 50, wherein the security association information further includes an encapsulating security payload (ESP) encryption algorithm identifier and one or more ESP encryption keys.

52. (previously presented) The system of claim 51, wherein the security association information further includes an ESP authentication algorithm identifier and one or more ESP authentication keys.

53. (previously presented) The system of claim 50, wherein the security association information further includes an authentication header (AH) authentication algorithm identifier and one or more AH authentication keys.

54. (previously presented) The system of claim 50, wherein the security association information includes protocol mode information.

55. (previously presented) The system of claim 47, wherein the database is stored in memory.

56. (previously presented) The system of claim 55, wherein the memory is contact addressable memory (CAM).

57. (previously presented) The system of claim 55, wherein the memory is random access memory (RAM).

58. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the system is a router.

59. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the system is a firewall.

60. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the system is a network communication device.

61. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the system is a security gateway.

62. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the system is a server.

63. (previously presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the system is a network line card.

64. (currently amended) A method for classifying data packets during security processing, comprising:

receiving at least a portion of a header for each data packet in a plurality of data packets;

determining security association information associated with each data packet in the plurality of data packets; and

for each data packet in the plurality of data packets, providing at least a portion of the security association information associated with the data packet to a corresponding security processing engine in a plurality of security processing engines that perform authentication and cryptographic functions.

65. (previously presented) The method of claim 64, wherein the step of determining security information comprises:

accessing a database to determine security association information.

66. (previously presented) The method of claim 65, wherein the step of determining security association information further comprises:

using one or more selectors to identify a security association entry in the database.

67. (previously presented) The method of claim 66, wherein the one or more selectors include at least one of destination IP address, a security protocol identifier, and a security parameter index.

68. (previously presented) The method of claim 66, wherein the one or more selectors include a destination IP address, a source IP address, and a transport layer protocol.

69. (previously presented) The method of claim 68, wherein the one or more selectors further include a source port and a destination port.

70. (previously presented) The method of claim 65, wherein the step of determining security association information further comprises:

if no security association information exists in the database associated with the packet, generating the security association information; and

storing the security association information in an entry in the database.